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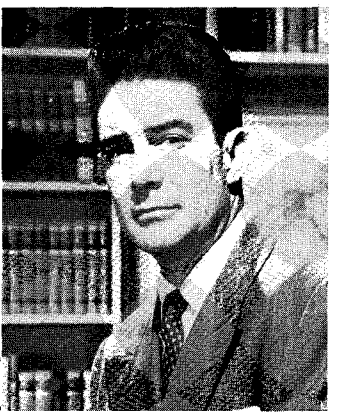

DAN SMOOT

LAOS — PART II

At a press conference on March 23, 1961, President Kennedy read a prepared statement on Laos, saying, among other things:

"Our special concern with the problem in Laos goes back to 1954. That year at Geneva, a large group of powers agreed to a settlement of the struggle for Indochina. Laos was one of the new states which had recently emerged from the French union and it was the clear premise of the 1954 settlement that this new country would be neutral, free of external domination by anyone. . . .

"But the efforts of a communist-dominated group to destroy this neutrality never ceased. In the last half of 1960, a series of sudden maneuvers occurred and the communists and their supporters turned to a new and greatly intensified military effort to take over. . . .

"In this military advance, the local communist forces . . . had increasing support and direction from outside.

"Soviet planes . . . have been conspicuous in a large-scale airlift into the battle area. Over 1000 sorties since last December 13, plus a whole supporting set of combat specialists, mainly from communist North Vietnam, and heavier weapons have been provided from outside. . . .

"If these attacks do not stop, those who support a truly neutral Laos will have to consider their response. The shape of this necessary response will of course be carefully considered, not only here in Washington, but in the SEATO conference with our allies which begins next Monday. . . .

"We are faced with a clear and one-sided threat of a change in the internationally agreed position of Laos. . . .

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"We strongly support the present British proposal of a prompt end of hostilities and prompt negotiation. . . .

"My fellow Americans, Laos is far away from America, but the world is small. . . . The security of all Southeast Asia will be endangered if Laos loses its neutral independence. Its own safety turns with the safety of us all. . . .

"Our response will be made in close cooperation with our allies, and the wishes of the Laotian government. . . .

"I know that every American will want his country to honor its obligations to the point that freedom and security of the free world and ourselves may be achieved."[1]

The President gave strong support to the British proposal (formally announced on the same day of the President's press conference); but this proposal was virtually identical with one which Khrushchev had made on December 23, 1960—and which we had rejected.

The President admitted that the international conference of 1954, which had guaranteed the neutrality of Laos, had accomplished nothing, because the "efforts of a communist-dominated group to destroy this neutrality never ceased." Yet he gave "strong support" to the idea of calling another international conference, of exactly the same composition as the Geneva Conference of 1954.

The President indicated that "our response" to the Soviet threat in Laos would comply with "the wishes of the Laotian government"; but the King of Laos was already on record as saying it was foreign meddling (*ours* included) which was tearing Laos to pieces.[2]

The 1954 treaty which created SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization) obligated the United States and seven other signatory powers to protect Laos against communist aggression and outside intervention.

In his press conference, the President showed that communist aggression in Laos, from the outside, was an established fact. If the SEATO powers intended to keep their pledge, they had only one choice: go to war immediately in Laos.

What, then, could the President have meant by indicating that "our response" in Laos would comply with the wishes of our SEATO allies, after they had a conference? Did he mean that, if the other SEATO nations failed to keep their treaty pledge, the United States would also repudiate the pledge? Why his closing lines about "every American" wanting "his country to honor its obligations"?

Does President Kennedy mean that the United States should honor its obligations only if our allies permit us to do so and promise to help?

March of Events

A review of news highlights following the President's March 23, 1961, press conference is revealing:

On March 26, 1961, President Kennedy told members of Congress that the United States, Britain, and France were in complete agreement not to let Laos fall into communist control.[3]

On March 28, 1961, the SEATO powers, meeting at Bangkok, agreed on a compromise resolution which said that members of SEATO would take "appropriate" action *if* the British proposal for a cease-fire and for negotiations failed, and if communist military attempts to control Laos continued.

Americans had suggested a "tougher" resolution, but the French feared to antagonize the Soviets.[4]

Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, and Pakistan were dismayed at United States vacillation; but New Zealand and Great Britain agreed with France on conciliation and compromise.[5]

On March 31, 1961, arriving in Washington from the SEATO meeting, Secretary of State Dean Rusk said he was "much encouraged" by the "free world unity" displayed at the conference. Mr. Rusk also indicated that the United States would accept an "unofficial cease-fire" in Laos, without insisting on a formal truce agreement, which we had

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previously demanded, as evidence of good faith by the Kremlin, and as a necessary condition to our consent to an international conference on Laos.[6]

On April 16, 1961, Secretary of State Dean Rusk said the Soviets wanted to start negotiations on Laos before fighting stopped there—but that the United States rejected such timing as a communist device for stalling.[7]

On April 21, 1961, the Soviet Union and Great Britain completed their agreement to call a cease-fire in Laos.

The agreement did not specify that the Laos truce must be verified before an international conference would be called.[8]

On April 22, 1961, United Press International reported from Laos:

"The Pathet Lao rebels (communists), striking while the government awaited news of a cease-fire agreement, attacked at dawn. . . ."[9]

On April 24, 1961, a cease-fire was accepted by the Boun Oum government and the communist Pathet Lao forces; but the cease-fire did not specify a time for troops to lay down their arms; so, the fighting continued.[10]

On April 29, 1961, President Kennedy and his top advisers met in a crisis session to decide whether to ask for military intervention in Laos, because the communists had refused to stop fighting. The President said the time for appeals and warnings to the communists had run out—that the time for action to back up the warnings had come; but that America must not act alone.[11]

On May 2, 1961, United Press International reported from Laos:

"The pro-Western Royal Laotian Army and the communist rebels put a cease-fire into effect on one front . . . today. But communist Pathet Lao troops were reported still advancing. . . .

"It was growing increasingly apparent here that the communists were delaying a full cease-fire in order to press their military offensive."[12]

The international conference on Laos actually began at Geneva on May 16, 1961, boycotted by the pro-western government of Laos—because communist rebel factions were given a seat at the conference on an equal basis with the legal government.[13]

The United States government had repeatedly asserted it would not go to the Geneva conference while fighting was still going on in Laos; but it went, and stayed there for months, while the communists kept fighting and gaining ground.

Note this May 27, 1961, Associated Press dispatch from Geneva (published in the *Shreveport Times,* May 28):

"The United States today accused the communist-led Pathet Lao rebels of repeatedly and wilfully violating the cease-fire in Laos, and demanded a halt. . . .

"The U.S. delegation is not prepared to sit in Geneva indefinitely while Pathet Lao artillery and rebel infantry units whittle away at territory held by the pro-Western Royal Laotian government."

As early as April 2, 1961, Ambassador W. Averell Harriman had said that the only solution in Laos was to set up the "coalition" government which the communists were demanding.[14]

On January 2, 1962, Winthrop G. Brown, United States Ambassador to Laos, "virtually had to force an audience" with representatives of the anti-communist Boun Oum government in Vientiane "to present Washington's point of view."

Washington's viewpoint was that Boun Oum should promise two important cabinet offices (Minister of Defense and Minister of the Interior) to men selected by "neutralist" Prince Souvanna Phouma, in a coalition government that would embrace the three major factions in Laos: anti-communists, communists, and "neutralists."

The *New York Times* story on this event indicated that the Boun Oum anti-communist government was resisting this United States "viewpoint," despite Laos's total dependence

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on American aid—and despite the fact that the United States was threatening to stop all aid in order to force the coalition.[15]

We stopped our aid to Laos on January 3, 1962;[16] but restored it on January 12, 1962, after Prince Boun Oum promised to go to Geneva for a conference with communists.[17] In February, 1962, we stopped aid to Laos again (and have not yet restored it) because Boun Oum has not accepted a coalition government on communist terms.[18]

Summary and Prediction

An article by E. W. Kenworthy, in the September 12, 1961, issue of *The New York Times*, reported that the 14-nation international conference on Laos, still in session at Geneva, had accomplished nothing since it convened in May. Kenworthy outlined the following conditions in Laos:

The three factions that must be brought together for a coalition are represented by: (1) Prince Boun Oum, pro-Western Premier of the Royal Laotian government; (2) Prince Souvanna Phouma, "neutralist" leader; and (3) Prince Souphanouvong, leader of the communist rebels.

The communists wanted neutralist Phouma to be made premier instead of pro-Western Boun Oum; and the United States had no objection, provided Phouma's government would not be communist-dominated.

The need to do something was urgent, because the Soviet airlift of military supplies to communist forces had continued without interruption, despite the Geneva conference which had been going on since May.

Harriman's prospects for getting agreement among the three Laotian leaders were dim, because "neutralist" Phouma and communist Souphanouvong had been together at communist headquarters for some time, refusing to meet with representatives of the pro-Western Boun Oum government, or with United States representatives.

This September 12, 1961, account of conditions in Laos provides a good basis for a summary of past events and for prediction of future developments.

Hoping to restore prestige which it had lost by accepting communist conquests elsewhere in Asia, the United States (in 1954) pledged never to permit communist conquest of Laos.

The Soviets immediately directed their puppets in Southeast Asia in relentless attack on the Laotian government which we were supporting and guaranteeing to protect.

We could not prevent communist harassment (and ultimate conquest) of Laos without involving ourselves in a disastrous land war in the impenetrable and inaccessible jungles of that primitive land.

If we made the mistake of getting into such a war, we could bleed ourselves white in a conflict which would actually help the Soviets.

Life is cheap in Asia. One thing the Asiatic nations have in surplus is human beings. No matter what the immediate military outcome of a war between the United States and communists in Laos, we would be grievously harmed. Every American life we sacrificed in Laos would hurt us a hundredfold more than a hundred Asian lives lost would hurt the communists.

A war between communist-controlled Asians and the United States in Laos would provide, as Korea did, a splendid training experience for communist military personnel and a testing ground for their tactics and equipment. The communists would be killing American youth, but we would not be killing Soviet soldiers. We would be killing Asian farmers and shopkeepers, thus intensifying Asian hatred for us and supporting the communist fiction that the Soviet Union is the friend of Asia; America, the enemy.

If we did not permit ourselves to be goaded into such a war, we would lose face throughout the world.

So, by our actions and our proclamations with regard to Laos, we set up a situation in which the Soviets were bound to win and we

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were bound to lose. If we went to war to keep our pledge, the consequences for us would be disastrous even if we achieved military victory. If we did not go to war, we would be disgraced. In either event, the Soviets would profit mightily.

In December, 1960, the Soviets opened the door for us to surrender, but at the same time intensified preparations for war: Khrushchev proposed an international conference on Laos, and also increased the Soviet airlift of military supplies to Laotian communists.

In March, 1961, we accepted the Soviet conference proposal (disguised as a British proposal), but asserted that we would not participate until fighting had actually stopped in Laos. The fighting had not stopped when we went to the Geneva Conference in May, 1961.

Prince Phouma, widely advertised as a "neutralist," was entertained and lionized in Moscow and Peiping, but refused invitations to visit Washington. Practically every public statement Phouma makes is laced with bitter denunciation of the United States.

Communists want a coalition government in Laos, representing all three factions: the communists, the "neutralists," and the pro-Western groups—with "neutralist" Phouma installed as Premier.

By September, 1961, we had formally accepted the Soviet plan for a coalition, knowing that their "neutralist" Phouma—who ostensibly was to represent the balance of power between communists and anti-communists—was himself a communist puppet.

But then, when we were ready to accept and implement the Soviet scheme, the communists demurred and refused to discuss the matter with us—making us wait and wheedle and plead for them to accept the *terms which they had specified in the first place.*

In Laos, a typical communist operation is near conclusion. In the end, we will accept the kind of coalition government the communists want, on terms they prescribe. Administration propagandists will try to convince the American people that we have settled the Laotian crisis honorably and well.

We will continue aid to Laos, claiming that events there have proven the effectiveness of our foreign aid in keeping a weak nation from being taken over by communists. But, within a year or two, the communists will complete their coup; and Laos will be universally recognized, and admitted to be, another communist puppet state behind the iron curtain.

The drama of Laos is monotonous repetition of the same drama enacted elsewhere. If we do not reverse our policy, it will be played again in South Vietnam, in Cambodia, in Thailand—in various parts of Asia, Africa, and Latin America—until we are such a discredited nation that the Kremlin will venture to ring down the iron curtain on the remainder of the world in a final action of violence.

What To Do

What should we do? We should get out of all the far corners of the earth where we now stand as self-appointed—and, generally, unwelcome—guardians, and uplifters, and moralizers, and subsidizers of people who would rather be left alone.

King Savang Vathana of Laos (whose kingdom has been supported almost entirely by the United States since it was torn from the French union) has said that his country "is going to pieces chiefly because other people are interfering"—that Laotians could solve their own problems if Americans and other outsiders would get out and quit meddling.[19]

Should we retreat and leave communists unopposed to gobble up the rest of the world?

The government of the United States has no constitutional right to use the resources of the American people to do anything what-

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ever for people of other nations. Clearly and emphatically, the Preamble to our Constitution states the purpose for which the Constitution was ordained and established. That purpose was to secure the blessings of liberty for *ourselves* and *our* posterity.

The United States has no right to intervene in the affairs of other nations as long as those nations are leaving us alone.

It is quite impossible for the United States (containing 6 per cent of the world's population) to support and defend the remaining 94 per cent of the people on earth.

In undertaking the unconstitutional and impossible task of supporting, defending, and reshaping the world, our government has so violated constitutional principles and the logic of facts and the inexorable laws of human nature, that its efforts *must* miscarry and accomplish the very opposite of their stated purpose.

In other words, our efforts to resist communism in the world have actually helped communism.

We spent millions of dollars to help Chinese nationalists resist communism; but in the end, it was the operation of our policies —the giving and withholding of aid at critical junctures to enforce political and military decisions on the nationalists—that helped the communists capture China. And when they captured China, they captured vast stores of American military and civilian goods which they used for their own evil purposes in other parts of Asia.

We spent 53,000 American lives to resist communist conquest in Korea; but, in the end, we formally agreed to the communists' having virtually everything they had set out to take; and it was the training, the experience, and the outcome of the Korean war that enhanced the power and prestige and morale of communists and made them a menacing force of major proportions in Asia.

We gave the French millions of dollars to resist communism in Indochina; but, in the end, communists (using American military equipment, obtained as a result of our fruitless efforts to resist communism elsewhere; and led by cadres of seasoned guerrillas who had been trained and equipped with American help) destroyed French power, took over a key portion of Indochina, and captured a huge new supply of American military equipment for continued warfare against the remainder of Southeast Asia.

In Laos, it was Kong Le (trained by Americans in the Philippines and schooled to command in the Royal Laotian Army which the United States built) who seized military power in August, 1960, and came close to final conquest of the nation for communism—and who has remained ever since the primary military figure on the communist side.

A brief history of Ho Chi-Minh rather well proves the point that American efforts to defend other nations have actually given indispensable aid to communism.

Ho Chi-Minh was born in French Indochina. While still very young, he shipped out as a seaman on a French ship. He spent years wandering around Europe and living in New York City, eventually settling down as a writer for French communist newspapers in Paris.

The French communist party sent him to Moscow for two years of training. From there, the Kremlin sent him to China on a mission to assassinate Chiang Kai-shek. He failed in this mission, and was expelled from China. The Kremlin then sent him to organize communist groups and guerrilla fighters in Hong Kong. The British imprisoned him in Hong Kong for 18 months as an anarchist and assassin.

When he was released, the Kremlin sent him to Bangkok, Thailand, to organize the Indochina communist party. After two years, Bangkok officials arrested and expelled him. The Kremlin sent him back into China, where

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he joined communist groups and ultimately worked his way back into Indochina.

In 1944—with a known police record (as a communist assassin) that stretched from Hong Kong to Paris—Ho Chi-Minh established contact with American OSS (Office of Strategic Services) men in Indochina and convinced them that he was not a communist but a patriot leading a resistance movement against the Japanese.

Through the OSS, he obtained American military equipment, with which he armed and trained communist guerrilla fighters throughout Indochina. He used the American arms not against the Japanese but against the French. Following the Korean war, Ho Chi-Minh's experienced guerrillas were reinforced and given captured American arms from red China. The result was the fall of Dienbienphu in May, 1954, and the destruction of French power in Indochina.[20]

Today, Ho Chi-Minh is the mastermind and the strong man behind the communist power that is in the process of conquering Laos. Without American help, where would this evil man, and the evil force he controls, be today?

Could Laos and other such nations defend themselves against communism if we got out and withdrew all aid? That is their problem. They say they want to handle their own problems in their own way, and we should permit them to do that. It seems obvious that they could do at least as well without our help as they have managed to do with it, since our efforts monotonously result, at last, in helping the communists. It also seems obvious that the military and industrial equipment which we give to small nations increase their attractiveness as prizes for communist conquest. Communists might not extend themselves to take primitive countries like Laos, if it were not for the lure of American goods to be captured.

Would we not lose face if we pulled out of all the places where we have given aid and publicly proclaimed that we would never permit communists to take over?

Could anything be worse for our prestige than the pattern we have followed, without deviation, since the "cold war" began—giving aid and promises, creating multi-nation collective defense organizations, and loudly

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proclaiming our deathless determination to hold the line against communism, but always retreating under a loud battery of words and explanations intended to obscure the fact that we were retreating?

If we stopped all foreign aid and reversed the foreign policy of the United States, while saying and showing that we intend to throw the communists out of Cuba and to permit no further communist conquests in our own neighborhood — letting the world see that, henceforward, the incalculable strength of the United States will be used to defend the American homeland—we would gain prestige. What is infinitely more important, we would gain such strength and economy that we would no longer need to fear war or national bankruptcy.

What about our responsibility in the world?

A great nation is the repository of a great civilization. The responsibility of that nation is to preserve its civilization for future generations.

We Americans are the heirs of all the ages; and, therefore, we do have responsibilities to the whole human race: the responsibility of preserving, refining, and passing on to our heirs our great civilization; the responsibility of holding aloft the torch of freedom as an example and beacon of hope for other people —a torch which other people may, or may not, choose to follow or guide themselves by without any meddling from us.

We cannot keep the torch of liberty burning in America if we continue to squander our blood and our treasure in ineffectual efforts to support and defend foreign lands whose people claim they do not need, and insist they do not want, our help.

If we permit the torch of liberty to burn out in the United States, the whole world—all of mankind—will be enveloped in a dark fog of hopelessness and despair.

If that catastrophe should come to this planet, those who survived it would eventually envy those who did not.

FOOTNOTES

(1) *Dallas Morning News*, March 24, 1961
(2) AP story from Vientiane, *Dallas Morning News*, March 18, 1961
(3) AP from Washington, *Dallas Times Herald*, March 26, 1961
(4) *Shreveport Journal*, March 29, 1961
(5) *Editorial Research Reports*, published in *Dallas Morning News*, March 28, 1961
(6) *Dallas Morning News*, April 1, 1961
(7) AP from Washington, *Dallas Times Herald*, April 17, 1961
(8) UPI from Moscow, *Dallas Morning News*, April 22, 1961
(9) *Dallas Morning News*, April 23, 1961
(10) AP from Vientiane, *Dallas Morning News*, April 25, 1961
(11) *Dallas Times Herald*, April 29, 1961
(12) *Dallas Times Herald*, May 2, 1961
(13) AP from Geneva, *Shreveport Journal*, May 16, 1961
(14) UPI, *Dallas Morning News*, April 3, 1961
(15) *New York Times*, January 3, 1962
(16) *New York Times*, January 5, 1962
(17) AP from Vientiane, *Dallas Morning News*, January 13, 1962
(18) AP from Vientiane, *Dallas Morning News*, March 5, 1962
(19) AP from Vientiane, *Dallas Morning News*, March 18, 1961; and *New York Times* News Service from Geneva, *Dallas Morning News*, May 11, 1961
(20) "Asian Red Boss—Educated Hangman: That's Ho Chi-Minh," column by Henry J. Taylor, *Dallas Times Herald*, January 5, 1962

WHO IS DAN SMOOT?

Dan Smoot was born in Missouri. Reared in Texas, he attended SMU in Dallas, taking BA and MA degrees from that university in 1938 and 1940.

In 1941, he joined the faculty at Harvard as a Teaching Fellow in English, doing graduate work for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the field of American Civilization.

In 1942, he took leave of absence from Harvard in order to join the FBI. At the close of the war, he stayed in the FBI, rather than return to Harvard.

He worked as an FBI Agent in all parts of the nation, handling all kinds of assignments. But for three and a half years, he worked exclusively on communist investigations in the industrial midwest. For two years following that, he was on FBI headquarters staff in Washington, as an Administrative Assistant to J. Edgar Hoover.

After nine and a half years in the FBI, Smoot resigned to help start the Facts Forum movement in Dallas. As the radio and television commentator for Facts Forum, Smoot, for almost four years spoke to a national audience giving both sides of great controversial issues.

In July, 1955, he resigned and started his own independent program, in order to give only one side — the side that uses fundamental American principles as a yardstick for measuring all important issues.

If you believe that Dan Smoot is providing effective tools for those who want to think and talk and write on the side of freedom, you can help immensely by subscribing, and encouraging others to subscribe, to *The Dan Smoot Report.*

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